

Libby - press



Western News: EPA's new Region 8 chief visits Libby
Jim Martin, Carol Rushin, Judith Wong, Eddie
Richard Mylott to: Sierra, Paula Smith, Steve Tuber, Debrah
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EPA's new Region 8 chief visits Libby



Brad Fuqua/The Western News EPA administrator James Martin laughs along with deputy Marygrace Galston during a light moment at Thursday's roundtable discussion with local leaders.

Posted: Wednesday, September 15, 2010 12:18 am
By Brad Fuqua, The Western News | 0 comments

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The economic theme loomed large during the meeting.

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Mike Cirian, local EPA field leader, said the situation with bridge parts manufacturer Stinger Welding serves as an example on how the federal agency can help.



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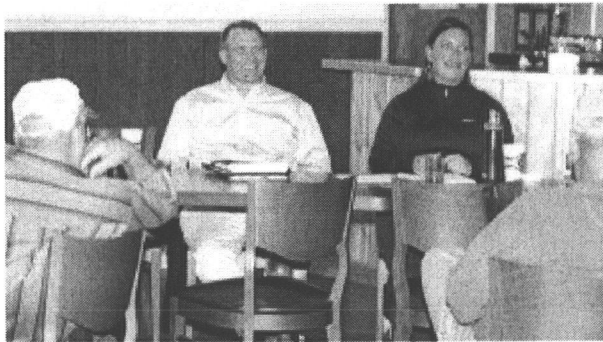
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Mike Cirian, local EPA field leader, said the situation with bridge parts manufacturer Stinger Welding serves as an example on how the federal agency can help.

"Stinger went to the front of the line," Cirian said. "Those are the types of things that we can do to think outside the box."

Martin toured the area after arriving on Wednesday of last week "to get a better sense of the situation." Stops included the former W.R. Grace & Co., vermiculite mine, Riverfront Park, the industrial district area and a number of homes that have gone through the cleanup process.

"What W.R. Grace left in its wake was a huge problem, a massive problem," Martin said. "What I saw today is that a lot of progress has been made. We've made huge progress in reducing ambient concentrations. I think perhaps it's more difficult to see if you're living here and worried about the economy but it's important for all of us to remember that we have made very significant progress and we're committed to working with the community and getting the job done."

Various issues were raised but economic challenges served as the theme of the day.

"From this meeting what I took away was feeling a sense of frustration with the challenge of restoring an economic base, given all that's happened here but also uncertainty about what the future holds," Martin said. "I think that the way we move forward in dealing with the work that remains to be done is we need to make sure that it's done consistently with the law but also respecting the concerns of the folks here and trying to help figure out what the economic future might be and so on."

Efforts to improve communication was also discussed.

"We have to have some understanding here about risk," said Dr. Brad Black of the Center for Asbestos Related Disease. "That's what we'd like to have – that type of communication." "If there are big decisions coming down the road, I'll come out and talk to you," Martin said in response.

Martin's appointment by the president did not require Senate confirmation. He formerly served as executive director of Colorado's Department of Natural Resources and chief of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Martin's past also includes working for 10 years as senior attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund in Boulder, Colo., and Oakland, Calif.

EPA's Denver-based Region 8 covers Montana, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming and 27 tribal nations.

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